

The Men of the Trees

Arbor Day Awards Nomination



Nomination Summary

The Men of the Trees Queensland has been dedicated to fostering the planting, maintenance and protection of trees in Southeast Queensland for over twenty years. In the last two years alone, the group has actively worked in over 13 sites in the western suburbs of Brisbane, dedicating over 3885 volunteer hours to maintaining over the 8659 plants put in the ground since July 2006. The Men of the Trees has actively engaged with the broader community to plant trees to improve the environment and encourage use of recreation areas for the community at large to enjoy.

Project Description

The Men of the Trees (MOTT) is a non-profit, non-political *international* society dedicated to fostering the planting, maintenance and protection of trees. The Queensland Society was *formed in 1980* and is based in Brisbane. Its membership is supported by a management committee, voluntary tree planters and other supporters drawn from a broad community base. The organisation believes in planting the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason.

The society formed in response to the recognition that deforestation has made a major impact on the visual and physical environment; and on the biodiversity values of Queensland. The Men of the Trees plant trees in parks as well as in degraded *urban and rural areas*; recognising that in some regions, tree planting is required to stabilise eroding soil profiles, provide flora and fauna habitat and generally help to restore environmental degradation whilst beautifying the environment and providing for the health and recreation of the community. The organisation also encourages tree planting to suit specific needs – for example, the planting of trees around the edges of open space, to *provide shade* for people using recreation areas or planting native food sources for fauna along riparian zones.

At the end of the 1980's the society was fortunate enough to acquire 'The Cottage' at The Gap where a nursery was established and run by volunteers. This nursery and environmental centre was eventually given to Greening Australia Queensland, a transaction which still provides the MOTT group with *5000 free trees* from the nursery each year. Now, the planting projects – at *thirteen sites* across the western and outer suburbs of Brisbane – are tended by members of MOTT *every Saturday morning* from January to December each year. The group's work is *supported by councils*, who recognise the hard work that the volunteers put into their projects. The active *core members* are so dedicated, that during the tough water restrictions in Brisbane, the group brought jerry cans full of water from their own rainwater tanks to ensure that plants survived the drought.

But it's not just the core members that do all the work – they are joined by members of the community from near and far; *families* living in the neighbourhood, *students* who want to learn more about the environment and people who just want the *exercise* involved in weeding, planting, watering and mulching. These members of the community are attracted to MOTT's working bees by the large amount of advertising that the core members do; ranging from large banners mounted on cars during working bees, signage at parks and community notice boards, newsletters as well as the numerous articles that are published in local newspapers.

Every six months, the group produces a *roster of working bees*, rotating their efforts around all of their sites to ensure that each receives the care, planting and maintenance that it deserves. This kind of dedication has ensured that MOTT's oldest plantings are now thriving forests. Working closely with two local councils – Brisbane City or Moreton Bay Regional Council, depending on the location of the site – MOTT plans its work to ensure the best outcome for the site, environment and community. In some cases, such as the 'National Tree Day' planting in July 2008, this involves over 2 months of preparation and consultation; meeting onsite, submitting plans and species lists, then redesigning them to take on different aspects of council's feedback. As well as planning for the physical planting, MOTT also spends time liaising with members of other community groups in the suburbs to attract extra sets of hands to assist with their valuable work – and returning the favour by *helping out with other group's projects*.

But it's not all hard work for the Men of the Trees. Social gatherings, DVD nights and field trips to locations of interest are some of the highlights for this group. The DVD nights are held regularly- their library has recently expanded to include a collection of environmental and community engagement documentaries. The field trips to different locations in South East Queensland are open to the community, not just members of MOTT and often incorporate a tour by local bush care or community group.

Outcomes

Since July 2006, the Men of the Trees have recorded 3885 *volunteer hours* which have been spent planting 8659 *plants* at *thirteen sites* in the Brisbane area. As well as planting trees, the group is dedicated to maintaining their plantings – even sites that are over 10 years old are weeded and mulched if it is deemed necessary. Some of their sites include the Bardon Girl Guide Hut at Coolibah St, Bardon, Cedar Creek on Tramway St, Ferny Grove, the Gubberley Creek site in Kenmore, Wightman Reserve on Cabbage Tree Creek in Ferny Hills and Taringa Parade in Taringa to name a few. Where possible when working with waterways in particular, their sites are *continually expanded*. The older parts of these plantings have grown into forests providing habitat and shade for the community. At least seven of MOTT's current sites include advanced trees and shrubs.

For *National Tree Day* in July 2008, MOTT organised a spectacular event at their Cedar Creek site in Ferny Grove. Over 100 members of the local community including a local Scout's group turned up to assist with digging the holes for the 1600 *plants* that were planted, watered and mulched. This planting was to continue the work that was done by MOTT along the riparian zone of Cedar Creek where they had already planted 800 trees from October 2007 – April 2008 to provide a natural corridor and create a natural shade areas for patrons of the park.

Recognising the 'changing face' of volunteering, MOTT has formed *close associations with a number of groups* to maximise efforts. Some of these groups include the Kedron Brook Catchment Association who MOTT have assisted on their revegetation sites, and a joint project with Greening Australia Queensland's Volunteer Program on the Gold's Scrub regeneration project at Lake Samsonvale. A successful partnership has been formed with the staff at the Marriott Brisbane and members of the Art of Living who attend working bees and help to spread the word. The society also *educates* service organisations, schools, Scouts and Guides, clubs, rural groups and individuals in achieving a better understanding of the role of trees in the environment and the community.

Future Actions and Ongoing Maintenance

The Men of the Trees is dedicated to the ongoing care of all of their sites, old and new alike. Every six months, a *maintenance schedule* is drawn up to make sure that each site is visited and maintained – if extra work needs to be done on a site, it has been known to find available members of MOTT removing weeds and watering plants on week days. The group hopes to continue its work (both maintenance and planting) well into the next decade, if not further into the future. Aside from the physical work, the organization is currently working to upgrade its *website* (www.menofthetrees.org.au) using state of the art techniques including the making of short videos to attract new members (and planters). A community carbon offset program and a plan for establishing a Queensland *register of significant trees* are also plans on the drawing board.

Final Comments and Supporting Documents

It is the absolute dedication of the Men of the Trees to continue their environmental and community work over two decades that makes them worthy of an Arbor Day Award in the Community Group / Group Tree Planter category. The group clearly puts so much effort into their work, thinking about the purpose for their plantings and planning for the long term – their successes in the past two years speak for themselves. Following is extra information (newspaper articles and photos) to support the nomination.

Northwest News
COMMUNITY



GT148370

■ Helping hand ... young green thumbs take part in the Men of the Trees planting day.

United for tree day

MORE than 100 people gathered in Ferny Grove during recent National Tree Day celebrations. Volunteer group Queensland Men of the Trees (MOTT) planted, mulched and watered 1600 native trees behind the Ferny Grove Police Station. MOTT president Fran Gilje said the day was a success. "Our National Tree Day effort was a true celebration of people working together with a common purpose," Ms Gilje said. Meanwhile, the Rotary Club of Albany Creek arranged a donation of 700 plants to All Saints School in Albany Creek. Several Rotarians and their wives then assisted the parents and children with planting. Students at Somerset Hills State School also contributed at their school, while at Samford Moreton Bay Divisional Councillor Bob Millar (Division 11) praised the community for helping plant 1600 trees at Samford Parklands.



PG148475

■ Helpers ... Chris Marks, Jacob Lawrence, Lukas Rumreich.

Help hills be alive with trees

By TARYN DAVIS

GREEN thumbs of Ferny Grove will be giving a community park a face lift at the end of July.

The Men of the Trees (MOTT) group is encouraging residents of the hills district to join them for National Tree Day and the rehabilitation of the green space behind Ferny Grove police station.

MOTT Queensland president Fran Gilje said the group had 10 sites across Queensland where they have actively reduced the effects of deforestation.

"We will be planting somewhere between 1000 and 1500 plants on July 26 at the Ferny Grove site," Ms Gilje said.

"We plant the trees for the sake of carbon emissions, but we were planting long before that became popular. It actually helps with the

climate and the water in the area as well.

"It would be nice if the local community could come down and be involved in their site."

Scout leader, Lee Dunlop, said the cub scouts would be joining in National Tree Day festivities being held in Ferny Grove as part of their involvement in community initiatives.

"We've got about 20 scouts going to the tree planting day.

"It's a good community project that we wanted to be a part of," Mr Dunlop said.

"Men of the Trees are organising it, and they're an organisation that plant trees in parks and creekways to help revegetate green areas," he said.

■ To be part of National Tree Day visit www.menofthetrees.org.au or phone 3851 0858.



■ Helping hands . . . Michael Pilguski, of the Kedron Scouts, will plant trees later this month.

Pair lead green mission

MORE than 30 self-confessed greenies planted 500 trees at Cedar Creek, Ferny Grove, last Saturday.

Andrew Burrows and Tristan Peach, from Men of the Trees Queensland, headed the working bee.

The two started the group in their teens and now, aged 27, have recruited more than a dozen core volunteers on a mission to beautify Brisbane.

"We started without any support from others, just clearing weeds and planting a few trees," Mr Peach said.

The pair then became involved with Men of the Trees, which was founded in 1980.

"Some of the wildlife species that have now returned to the area



PC136267

■ Going green . . . Andrew Burrows and Fran Gilje, from Men of the Trees, plant trees at Ferny Grove.

include carpet snakes, glow bugs, bush turkeys and possums," Mr Burrows said. To become involved, phone Fran Gilje on 3851 0858.

Plantings kept up



■ Growing pains . . . Fran Gilje and Marion Goward.

WATER restrictions might have slowed down the work of The Men of the Trees but it won't be the end of them.

The Brisbane branch of the group, which aims to heal the earth by planting trees, celebrated its 25th anniversary recently with a special tree planting ceremony.

Marion Goward joined the Men of the Trees in the mid-1990s.

"I've always had an interest in restoring native species to the landscape and bringing back habitats for animals," she said.

"We have about 100 members in the group but not all of them are active.

"There's a group of about eight who go out every weekend to do plantings," she said, adding that Greening Australia donated 5000 plants a year for the group to plant.

Ms Goward said the council had recently put a hold on all plantings because of drought-induced water restrictions.

"We can't use town water or hoses, but there are some sites where we have special permission to hand water to save our new plantings," she said.

For more information phone group co-ordinator Fran Gilje on 3851 1448-0258

Men of the Trees visit Beaudesert

BEAUDESERT became the focus of attention for a group known as the Men of the Trees (MOTT) on Saturday.

Eleven members of the environmental/tree planting group, MOTT, visited several areas of Beaudesert Shire and were given a tour by members of the Beaudesert Community Arts and Information Centre.

The group visited a number of environmental and historical sites throughout the shire including Beaudesert's first homestead.

MOTT is a group of like minded individuals who are volunteer tree planters.

Volunteer co-ordinator Fran Gilje said the group planted 48 out of 52 Saturdays in a year and worked on various sites and projects.

"Our motto is, 'have trees, will travel'," she said.

MOTT began operating 84 years ago in Kenya and now has bases all over the world.

While originally only catering for male volunteers, the group now has a healthy mix of men and women working together for the environment.

Ms Gilje said the group had no plans to plant in Beaudesert but liked to visit areas and keep their options open.

"If we were asked by the council or a group to help out, we would try to fit them into our schedule," she said.



Members of a volunteer tree planting group called The Men of The Trees visited Beaudesert on Saturday.

FOR COMMUNE ANGLICAN CHURCH BUSHCAREWORKS

'Goings-on' at "Upper" Gubberley Creek

By Anne Stone



Anne Stone (left) and Fran from MOTT working on Church grounds.

I use the word "Upper" unofficially, to distinguish between the projects at the upper end and those in Lower Gubberley Creek. Incidentally, does anyone know exactly where Gubberley Creek starts and flows before it appears at the Eastern side of the Karamore Primary School Oval? I'd love to know. This very dry year, there has been a small flow in the creek continuing to come from somewhere - except for a few weeks just before the last rain, after which it briefly "ran a banger", and is again still trickling along.

There has been an amazing transformation along Upper Gubberley on the Karamore Anglican Church property when Church working bees commenced the daunting task of unblocking huge sand-carrying gullies and ditches (as well as practically every other "hoop" on the road too) which were choking the creek bank on their site. The Gubberley Creek Bushcare Group had already made a start on a portion of the Church land in previous years with wonderful results, but needed to concentrate on adjacent sites - however, their efforts spurred the new group on. Then in the midst of our despair, along came "The Men of the Team" with offers of help. In early 2008, MOTT

started clearing, planting and maintaining in stages, with help from Church members with follow-up watering and weeding. Since that time it is estimated that over 4000 wildlife-friendly native plants

... 70 Richmond Birdwing Butterfly food vines *Aristolochia procerasea* planted ...

(supplied by the Greening Australia Nursery) have been planted along the creek, and these are now a joy to behold. Another recent addition to these plants came from a newly-married couple who wished to celebrate their marriage by planting (with the help of MOTT) 100 trees on the Church grounds in their contribution to counteract global warming. We were able to establish these with a load of mulch and recycled water (into a newly installed rainwater tank on the Church grounds), and the plants are (so far!) all looking great.

A few months ago, a partnership with the Karamore Anglican Church Bushcareers, MOTT and the Western Suburbs branch of the Richmond Birdwing Recovery Network Inc. (RBRN), saw approx.


70 Richmond Birdwing Butterfly food vines *Aristolochia procerasea* planted on the Church grounds and also (later) down the creek on land owned by the Karamore Living Church. The plants were donated by the RBRN (Western Suburbs Branch). They have been lovingly tended by the Anglican Group, who may sometimes be seen along the creek with a 3 litre container of grey water in each hand. The vines are surviving (and a few actually growing) with the exception of 7 plants due to the dry soil and water from the resident carleps. (The latter seem to have been thwarted since we piled rocks and other debris around the plants' bases).

The Brisbane Diocese of the Anglican Church has established a group called "Angli-Green" to encourage all their parishes to "think green" and contribute to measures to counteract Global Warming and degradation of habitat. An e-mail has been sent to parishes to encourage people to check their own actions and attitudes and endeavour to create more environmentally-friendly parish centres.

Isn't it amazing how sometimes there needs to be a crisis to really get us going!

Best wishes to all the Cashmere locals.
Anne Stone (Karamore Anglican Church Bushcareers)
3178 4115

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... a newly-married couple ... wished to celebrate their marriage by planting 100 trees on the Church grounds as their contribution to counteract global warming...



Stopping for a well deserved tea break.



Working on a planting site.



Students chip in on the fun.



The team that works at Gold's Scrub, Lake Samsonvale.



Some of the thick forest areas growing due to MOTT's efforts.